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EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

21 Application number: 86104450.1

61 Int. Cl.⁴: **G 21 C 7/00**
G 21 C 3/32

22 Date of filing: 01.04.86

30 Priority: 29.03.85 JP 63657/85

43 Date of publication of application:
08.10.86 Bulletin 86/41

84 Designated Contracting States:
DE SE

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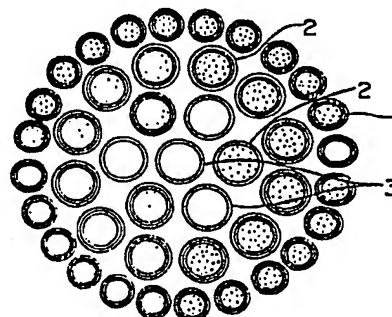
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54 Fuel assembly for nuclear reactor.

57 Provided are fuel assemblies each having an outer peripheral zone and a central zone surrounded by the former and adapted to be loaded in a reactor core, the fuel rods therein being arrayed in a certain pattern such that the fuel rods (1) disposed in the outer peripheral zone have a smaller fuel volume than that of those (2) disposed in the central zone. Such a fuel assembly offers a suitable distribution of local power output as well as a high degree of burn-up.

FIG. 1



FUEL ASSEMBLY FOR NUCLEAR REACTOR

1 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION:

The present invention relates to a fuel assembly adapted to be loaded in the core of a nuclear reactor.

In a reactor core, a multiplicity of fuel assemblies are arrayed in a predetermined pattern. Since moderators such as D_2O and H_2O are filled in the space between adjacent fuel assemblies, the density of neutrons in the vicinity of the outer peripheral zone of each fuel assembly is high, so that the local power output of each fuel assembly is high in the outer peripheral zone and is considerably low in the central zone thereof.

In order to equalize the local power output, a conventional fuel assembly is arranged such that fuel rods with a high fuel enrichment factor are disposed in a zone having a low thermal neutron flux density, while fuel rods with a low fuel enrichment factor are disposed in a zone having a high thermal neutron flux density.

A recent tendency of light water reactors and heavy water reactors is to prolong the operating cycle from twelve months to 15 months by improving the capacity utilization ratio of the reactor. To this end, it is necessary to increase enrichment. Consequently, the distribution of density of fissile material contained in the reactor core becomes considerably uneven, and the thermal neutron flux density also varies locally in the

- 1 reactor core and fuel assemblies. As a method of 0196655
equalizing the local power output in the core and to
minimize the maximum value of local power in the core as
practically as possible, a method is generally taken in
5 which the enrichment factor of fuel disposed in a zone
having a high thermal neutron flux density is set such as
to be lower than that of fuel disposed in a zone having a
low thermal neutron flux density, thereby equalizing
local variations in the thermal neutron flux density.
- 10 As described above, in order to equalize the distribution
of local power in fuel assemblies, a method is taken
whereby the enrichment of fuel rods disposed in the outer
peripheral zone having a high thermal neutron flux density
is decreased, while the enrichment of fuel rods disposed
15 in the central zone is increased.

However, if the fuel enrichment factor is
increased to prolong the operating cycle, variations in
the thermal neutron flux density becomes noticeable, and
the thermal neutron flux becomes very high in the outer
20 peripheral zone of each fuel assembly, while it becomes
extremely low in the central zone. Namely, the local
power output in the outer peripheral zone of each fuel
assembly becomes maximum, and if the fuel enrichment
factor is increased, the maximum local power output also
25 increases. In order to prevent the maximum local power
output from increasing, it becomes necessary to set the
difference between the enrichment of fuel disposed in
the outer peripheral zone and that of fuel disposed in

1 the central zone to a very large level. For instance,
in fuel assemblies for a nuclear reactor operated with
a long-term operating cycle of one year or longer, an
attempt is made to equalize the power output per fuel
5 rod of a fuel assembly by reducing the enrichment of fuel
rods disposed in the outer peripheral zone to approxi-
mately one half of that disposed in the central zone.

Nevertheless, since there is the problem that
it is necessary to inhibit the thermal stress of fuel
10 rods with respect to cladding pipes, it is impossible to
unlimitedly increase the maximum local power output per
fuel rod. Hence, the enrichment per fuel rod cannot be
set to an extremely high level. As a result, to equalize
the distribution of power output, fuel rods whose fuel
15 enrichment is average or below are disposed in the zone
having a high neutron flux density that contributes
substantially to nuclear fission. Consequently, it
becomes impossible to effectively burn up the fissile
material, which is the fuel.

20 To overcome the aforementioned problems, a fuel
assembly for a light water reactor has been proposed in
which the power output per fuel rod is reduced by making
the diameter of fuel rods small so as to reduce the
temperature of fuel, and, at the same time, a greater
25 volume of fissile material is disposed in the zone having
a high thermal neutron flux density. If the diameter of
fuel rods is simply made small, however, the fabrication
of fuel assemblies becomes complicated, since the number

1 of fuel rods increases, and also since the diameter of
fuel rods becomes small. In addition, the volumetric
share of materials other than fissile material such as
cladding pipes increases, thereby giving rise to such
5 problems as an increase in the volume of wasteful
absorbents for neutrons.

In addition, the specification of Japanese
Patent Unexamined Publication No. 40187/1978 discloses
an arrangement in which fuel rods are arrayed in the
10 shape of a triangular or square lattice inside each
pressure tube of a pressure tube type reactor, and small-
diameter fuel rods are disposed in nonuniform and
relatively large spaces between the inner surfaces of
pressure tubes and the array of fuel rods in the outer
15 peripheral layer. This arrangement disclosed in the
specification of Japanese Patent Unexamined Publication
No. 40187/1978 is an attempt to make uniform the interval
between the array of fuel rods and the inner wall of
pressure tubes so as to set the flow rate of light water
20 flowing therein to a fixed level. With this arrangement,
however, two types of fuel rods comprising a set of
large-diameter fuel rods and another set of small-diameter
fuel rods are mixed in the zone having a high neutron
flux density, i.e., the outer peripheral zone. In such
25 an arrangement, it is difficult to equalize the distribu-
tion of local power output.

Furthermore, in the specification of U. S.
Patent No. 3132076, a fuel assembly for a boiling water

1 reactor for the purpose of equalizing the distribution
 of power output is proposed. This fuel assembly is
 arranged such that slit-like channels for light water
 are provided between the arrays of fuel rods, each array
 5 being disposed in the shape of a square lattice, and the
 ratio between light water and fuel is made large so as
 to equalize the distribution of power output. According
 to this method, it becomes possible to attain the equali-
 zation of power output to some extent, but the amount
 10 of fuel decreases by the portion in which light water
 channels are provided. However, no consideration is
 given in that specification as to how the output per fuel
 rod can be increased by taking that situation into account.

Consideration will be given hereinafter of the
 15 linear heat rating per unit length of a fuel rod by
 paying attention to individual fuel rods of each fuel
 assembly.

Assuming that the zone having a high thermal
 neutron flux density contributing to nuclear fission is
 20 H, and that the zone having a low thermal neutron flux
 density is L, the linear heat rating of each fuel rod
 in the respective zones can be given by the following
 formulae (1) and (2):

$$P(H) = N(H) \times \sigma_f(L) \times \phi(H) \times V \dots\dots (1)$$

$$P(L) = N(L) \times \sigma_f(L) \times \phi(L) \times V \dots\dots (2)$$

Where P (H): linear heat rating (W/cm) of fuel in a fuel

- 1 rod in the zone of a high neutron flux
density H
- N (H): density of fissile material (pc/cm^3) in a
fuel rod in the zone of a high neutron flux
5 density H
- σ_f (H): microscopic fission cross section (cm^2) of
in the zone of a high neutron flux density H
- ϕ (H): neutron flux density (thermal
neutron/ $\text{cm}^2 \cdot \text{sec}$) in the zone of a high
10 neutron flux density H
- P (L): linear heat rating (W/cm) of fuel in a fuel
rod in the zone of a low neutron flux
density H
- N (L): density of fissile material (pc/cm^3) in a
15 fuel rod in the zone of a low neutron flux
density L
- σ_f (L): microscopic fission cross section (cm^2) of
in the zone of a low neutron flux density L
- ϕ (L): neutron flux density (thermal
20 neutron/ $\text{cm}^2 \cdot \text{sec}$) in the zone of a low
neutron flux density L
- V: fuel volume (cm^3)

From the premise, it follows that ϕ (H) > ϕ (L).

With respect to the power output of fuel rods,
25 the maximum power output should desirably be low. For
this reason, it is necessary to decrease a power peaking

1 factor so that the power output of fuel rods is brought
close to the average power output. This means that P
(H) and p (L) in Formulae (1) and (2) should be brought
as close to each other as possible.

5 If the power output of fuel rods in the zone
of a high thermal neutron flux density and the zone of
a low thermal neutron flux density is assumed to be
 P_0 (H) and P_0 (L), respectively, a method has conventional-
ly been adopted to change an enrichment factor N in
10 response to the magnitude of the thermal neutron flux
so that P_0 (H) \approx P_0 (L). In other words,

$$P_0 \text{ (H)} = N_0 \text{ (H)} \times \sigma_{f0} \text{ (H)} \times \phi_0 \text{ (H)} \times V_0 \quad \dots (3)$$

$$P_0 \text{ (L)} = N_0 \text{ (L)} \times \sigma_{f0} \text{ (L)} \times \phi_0 \text{ (L)} \times V_0 \quad \dots (4)$$

$$N_0 \text{ (H)} < N_0 \text{ (L)} \quad \dots \dots \dots (5)$$

$$\phi_0 \text{ (H)} > \phi_0 \text{ (L)} \text{ (shown in Fig. 7)} \quad \dots \dots \dots (6)$$

In view of the foregoing reason, fuel of
low-density fissile material, i.e., fuel of a low
enrichment factor, is disposed in the zone of a high
15 thermal neutron flux density. Thus, as described earlier,
it has been very difficult to improve the degree of
burn-up without increasing the maximum local power of
the fuel rods of fuel assemblies and to equalize the local
power of fuel assemblies.

20 A general object of the present invention is
to provide a fuel assembly which is capable of attaining
a high degree of burn-up without accompanying an increase

- 1 in the maximum local power and of equalizing the distribution of local output.

According to the present invention, there is provided a fuel assembly in which the fuel volume V of
5 a fuel rod is adjusted so that $P(H) \approx P(L)$ where $P(H)$ is the fuel power density of a fuel rod in the zone of a high neutron flux density, and $P(L)$ is the fuel output density of a fuel rod in the zone of a low neutron flux density.

- 10 In other words, if, in

$$P(H) = N(H) \times \sigma_f(H) \times \phi(H) \times V(H) \dots (7)$$

and

$$P(L) = N(L) \times \sigma_f(L) \times \phi(L) \times V(L) \dots (8)$$

it is assumed that

$$N(H) = N(L) \dots \dots \dots (9)$$

$$\phi(H) > \phi(L) \text{ (shown in Fig. 7)} \dots \dots \dots (10)$$

$$V(H) < V(L) \text{ (shown in Fig. 7)} \dots \dots \dots (11)$$

Then, it becomes possible to bring the values of $P(H)$ and $P(L)$ close to each other.

- 15 Specifically, the present invention provides a fuel assembly for a nuclear reactor, adapted to be loaded

1. in a reactor core, wherein a plurality of fuel rods are
disposed in a predetermined pattern in the cross-sectional
direction of the fuel assembly, the fuel rods including
those that are arrayed in the outer peripheral zone of
5 the fuel assembly, those that are arrayed in the inter-
mediate zone thereof, and those that are arrayed in the
central zone thereof, the fuel rods having a substantially
fixed factor of fuel enrichment, and each fuel rod arrayed
in the outer peripheral zone has a fuel volume smaller
10 than that of each fuel rod arrayed in the intermediate
zone and the central zone.

Furthermore, according to the arrangement of
an embodiment of the present invention, there is provided
a fuel assembly for a nuclear reactor, adapted to be
15 loaded in a reactor core, wherein a plurality of fuel
rods are disposed in a predetermined pattern in the
cross-sectional direction of the fuel assembly, the fuel
rods including those that are arrayed in the outer
peripheral zone of the fuel assembly, those that are
20 arrayed in the intermediate zone thereof, and those that
are arrayed in the central zone thereof, the fuel rods
having a substantially fixed factor of fuel enrichment,
and each fuel rod arrayed in the outer peripheral zone
having a diameter smaller than that of each fuel rod
25 arrayed in the intermediate zone and the central zone.

The above and other advantages of the invention
will become more apparent in the following description
and the accompanying drawings.

1 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS:

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Fig. 1 is a cross-sectional view of a fuel assembly for a pressure tube type reactor according to an embodiment of the present invention;

5 Fig. 2 is a cross-sectional view of a conventional fuel assembly for a pressure tube type reactor;

Fig. 3 is a cross-sectional view of a fuel assembly for a pressure tube type reactor according to another embodiment of the present invention;

10 Fig. 4 is a cross-sectional view taken along the axis of the assembly shown in Fig. 3;

Fig. 5 is a cross-sectional view of a fuel assembly for a boiling light water reactor embodying the present invention;

15 Fig. 6 is a cross-sectional view of a fuel assembly for a pressurized light water reactor embodying the present invention; and

Fig. 7 is a diagram illustrating the distribution of neutron flux density of each array of fuel in a
20 conventional example and the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS:

Fig. 1 is a cross-sectional view of a fuel assembly for a pressure tube type reactor according to an embodiment of the present invention. The fuel assembly
25 shown in Fig. 1 is adapted to be loaded in a pressure tube having an inner diameter of approximately 120 mm and the details of its construction is shown in Table 1. In other

1 words, 15 large-diameter fuel rods 2 are arrayed in the
intermediate and central zones, while 24 small-diameter
fuel rods 2 are arrayed in the outer peripheral zone in
this embodiment. The large-diameter fuel rods 2 disposed
5 in the intermediate and central zones have an outer
diameter of approximately 15.7 mm, and about 13.6 mm-
diameter fuel pellets are loaded therein, respectively.

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Table 1

| Fuel layer | No. of fuel rods | Diameter of fuel pellets (mm) | Outer diameter of clad pipe (mm) | Weight of fissile material |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Central zone | 3 | 13.6 | 15.7 | 0.3 wt. % ^{235}U (depleted uranium) |
| Inter-mediate zone | 12 | 13.6 | 15.7 | 3.0 wt. % $P_u(f_{ia})$ (P_{uMOS}) * |
| Outer peripheral zone | 24 | 9.6 | 11.2 | 3.0 wt. % $P_u(f_{ia})$ (P_{uMOS}) * |
| Total fuel | 39 | - | - | 0.62 wt. % ^{235}U + 2.4 wt. % $P_u(f_{ia})$ |

* Plutonium is mixed in natural uranium oxides.

(However, it is also possible to use depleted uranium.)

1 In addition, four central support rods 3 for
supporting fuel spacers are disposed in the central
portion of the fuel assembly. Small-diameter fuel rods
1 in the outer peripheral zone have an approximately 11.2
5 mm outer diameter, and fuel pellets having an outer
diameter of about 9.6 mm are loaded therein, respectively.
The overall length of the fuel pellet is about 3,700 mm,
and if the electric power of a nuclear reactor is
assumed to be 600,000 kW, the number of pressure tubes
10 required is about 650. As a coolant, light water or
heavy water is employed. The fuel assembly shown in
Fig. 1 includes fuel rods, central support rods, fuel
spacers for supporting fuel rods that are not shown, and
upper and lower templates. The central support rods play
15 the role of allowing the coolant to flow through a flow
section, and the coolant flows slowly through the inside
of the supporting rods. According to the embodiment
shown in Fig. 1, the number of large-diameter fuel rods
is 15. To adjust the weight of fuel and equalize the
20 output distribution, several fuel rods among the fuel rods
disposed in the intermediate and central zones may also
be made into coolant rods in which the coolant flows
slowly without fuel pellets loaded therein.

 As fuel for the fuel assembly shown in Fig. 1,
25 it is possible to use slightly enriched uranium oxide
fuel, or a fuel mixture of uranium oxide and plutonium
oxide fuel. In the embodiment shown in Fig. 1, fuel
material which is enhanced with 3.0 wt% fissile plutonium

- 1 added in the form of plutonium oxide to natural uranium
oxide is employed for the large-diameter fuel rods 2.
As for the three fuel rods in the central zone, depleted
uranium fuel is used. This 3.0 wt% can be expressed by
5 the following formula:

$$3.0 \text{ wt\%} = \frac{{}^{239}\text{P}_u + {}^{241}\text{P}_u}{{}^{235}\text{U} + {}^{238}\text{U} + {}^{239}\text{P}_u + {}^{240}\text{P}_u + {}^{241}\text{P}_u + {}^{242}\text{P}_u}$$

(wt% of
fissile
plutonium)

- Fig. 2 shows a conventional fuel assembly in
which fuel rods have the same diameter as those of the
large-diameter fuel rods of the fuel assembly of this
embodiment, and the details of construction of the
10 conventional fuel assembly are shown in Table 2 for the
sake of comparison.

Table 2

| Fuel layer | No. of fuel rods | Diameter of fuel pellets (mm) | Outer diameter of clad pipe (mm) | Weight of fissile material |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Central zone | 6 | 13 | 15 | 3.6 wt.% $P_u(f_{ia})$ (P_{uMOS}^*) |
| Inter-mediate zone | 12 | 13 | 15 | 3.6 wt.% $P_u(f_{ia})$ (P_{uMOS}^*) |
| Outer peripheral zone | 18 | 13 | 15 | 1.2 wt.% $P_u(f_{ia})$ (P_{uMOS}^*) |
| Total fuel | 36 | - | - | 0.7 wt.% $^{235}U + 2.4 \text{ wt.}\% P_u(f_{ia})$ |

* ... Plutonium is mixed in natural uranium oxides.

1 Fig. 2 is a conventional fuel assembly for a
pressure tube type reactor, which is arranged such that
36 fuel rods having the same diameter are bundled
together. One support rod 8 for supporting fuel rods
5 by means of fuel spacers is disposed in the central
portion of the fuel assembly. A comparison of character-
istics between the embodiment of the present invention
shown in Fig. 1 and the conventional fuel shown in Fig.
2 is given in Table 3 below.

Table 3

| Item | Fuel | | Fig. 1 (Embodiment of this invention) | Fig. 2 (Conventional fuel) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| | Dia of fuel rod (mm) | Central and intermediate zones | | |
| | | Outer peripheral zone | 15.7 mm | approx. 15 mm |
| | | | 11.2 mm | |
| Weight of fuel per assembly (effective length: 3,700 mm) (kg) | | | approx. 170 kg | approx. 170 kg |
| Weight of fissile material per assembly (kg) | | 235u | approx. 0.9 kg | approx. 1.0 kg |
| | | $P_u(f_{ia})$ | approx. 3.6 kg | approx. 3.5 kg |
| Weight percent of fissile material (wt%) | | 235u | approx. 0.62 wt% | approx. 0.7 wt% |
| | | $P_u(f_{ia})$ | approx. 2.4 wt% | approx. 2.4 wt% |
| Burn-up degree (MWD/t) | | | approx. 38000 MWD/t | approx. 30000 MWD/t |
| Local power peaking factor | | | approx. 1.09 (fuel in outer peripheral zone) | approx. 1.13 (fuel in outer peripheral zone) |
| Maximum linear heat rating (W/cm) | | | approx. 430 W/cm | approx. 490 W/cm |

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1 As shown above, in the case of the fuel assembly
according to the embodiment of the present invention
shown in Fig. 1, in which the plutonium enhancement is
set such as to be identical with that of the conventional
5 fuel, the weight of uranium 235 was found to be slightly
small, but the burn-up degree was approximately 38,000
MWD/t. Thus, it can be seen that the fuel assembly of
this embodiment is capable of increasing the burn-up
degree by about 8000 MWD/t as compared with approximately
10 30,000 MWD for the conventional fuel. The local power
peaking factor in the embodiment shown in Fig. 1 was
about 1.09. With respect to the maximum linear heat
rating, in a case where 650 pressure tubes were employed
and the two types of fuel were used for a reactor generat-
15 ing a thermal output of 1,950 MW, the maximum linear
heat rating of the conventional fuel shown in Fig. 2 was
490 W/cm, whereas, in the case of the embodiment of the
present invention shown in Fig. 1, the maximum linear
heat rating decreased to approximately 430 W/cm, which
20 was attributable to an increase in the number of fuel
rods per fuel assembly to 39 as well as the advantage
that the aforementioned local power peaking factor was
substantially reduced to approximately 430 W/cm.

Referring next to Figs. 3 and 4, description
25 of another embodiment of the present invention will be
made hereinafter.

Fig. 3 is a cross-sectional view of a fuel
assembly according to another embodiment of the present

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1 invention.

The fuel assembly shown in Fig. 3 is adapted to be loaded in a pressure tube having an inner diameter of approximately 120 mm, and the details of its structure are shown in Table 4. As for fuel rods, 12 large-diameter fuel rods 2 are employed for the central zone, and 24 small-diameter fuel rods 1, for the outer peripheral zone.

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Table 4

| Fuel layer | No. of fuel rods | Diameter of fuel pellets (mm) | Outer diameter of clad pipe (mm) | Weight of fissile material |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Central zone | 12 | 14.2 | 16.5 | 2.8 wt.% $P_u(f_{ia})$ (P_{uMOS}) * |
| Outer peripheral zone | 24 | 10.0 | 12.0 | 2.8 wt.% $P_u(f_{ia})$ (P_{uMOS}) * |
| Total fuel | 36 | - | - | 0.7 wt.% ^{235}U + 2.8 wt.% $P_u(f_{ia})$ |

1 In addition, further four large-diameter circular
tubes 4 are disposed in the central zone. The cladding
pipes of these fuel rods and the central circular pipes
4 are all made of a zirconium alloy. The large-diameter
5 fuel rods 2 in the central zone have an outer diameter
of approximately 16.5 mm, and fuel pellets having an
outer diameter of approximately 14.2 mm are loaded in
them. The 24 small-diameter fuel rods 1 in the outer
peripheral zone have an outer diameter of approximately
10 12 mm, and fuel pellets having an outer diameter of
approximately 10 mm are loaded in them.

The fuel material and coolant employed in the
fuel assembly shown in Fig. 3 are the same as those
employed in the embodiment shown in Fig. 1. In the
15 embodiment shown in Fig. 3, fuel material is used which
is enhanced with about 2.78 wt% fissile plutonium added
in the form of plutonium oxide to natural uranium oxide
fuel.

With respect to the coolant flowing in the
20 central circular tube 4 shown in Fig. 3, its flow rate
is held to a small level in such a manner that a pressure
loss does not become high although the coolant is allowed
to flow. Fig. 4 illustrates the longitudinal configura-
tion of the fuel assembly shown in Fig. 3. The fuel
25 assembly is arranged such that small transverse holes 13,
14 serving as inlets and outlets for the coolant are
provided in the upper and lower portions of the central
circular tube 4 in Fig. 4.

- 1 A comparison between the fuel of the embodiment of the present invention shown in Fig. 3 and the conventional fuel shown in Fig. 2 is given in Table 5 below.

Table 5

| Fuel | | Fig. 3 (Embodiment of this invention) | Fig. 2 (conventional fuel) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Item | | | |
| Dia. of fuel rod (mm) | Central zone | 16.5 mm | approx. 15 mm |
| | Outer peripheral zone | 12.0 mm | |
| Weight of fuel per assembly (effective length: 4,000 mm) (kg) | | approx. 155 kg | approx. 180 kg |
| Weight of fissile material per assembly (kg) | ^{235}U | approx. 0.95 kg | approx. 1.1 kg |
| | $P_u(f_{ia})$ | approx. 3.8 kg | approx. 3.8 kg |
| Weight percent of fissile material (wt%) | ^{235}U | approx. 0.7 wt% | approx. 0.7 wt% |
| | $P_u(f_{ia})$ | approx. 2.8 wt% | approx. 2.4 wt% |
| Burn-up degree (MWD/t) | | approx. 41,000 MWD/t | approx. 30,000 MWD/t |
| Local power peaking factor | | 1.07 (central zone) 0.95 (outer peripheral zone) | 1.13 (our peripheral zone) |

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- Cont'd -

Table 5 (Cont'd)

| | | |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Max. linear heat density (W/cm) | approx. 460 W/cm (central zone) | approx. 490 W/cm (outer peripheral zone) |
| Max. thermal flux (W/cm ²) | approx. 109 W/cm ² (outer peripheral zone) | approx. 109 W/cm ² (outer peripheral zone) |

1 As shown in Table 5, in the case of the fuel
of the embodiment of the present invention shown in Fig.
3, the weight of uranium 235 per fuel assembly was
slightly small as compared with the conventional fuel.
5 Even if the weight of fissile plutonium is made identical,
its burn-up degree was approximately 41,000 MWd/t, and
it hence becomes possible to improve the burn-up degree
by about 11,000 MWd/t (about 37%) as compared with about
30,000 MWd/t for the conventional fuel. In the case of
10 the conventional fuel, it has been necessary to replace
120 fuel assemblies per year in a nuclear power plant
generating an electric power of 600,000 kW, whereas, in
the case where the fuel of the embodiment shown in Fig.
3 is used, only 100 fuel assemblies may be replaced.
15 This translates into a reduction of 20 fuel assemblies
per year, which means that 17% fuel can be conserved.
In addition, during the initial stage of burn-up according
to the embodiment shown in Fig. 3, the local power peaking
occurred in the fuel in the central zone, and its factor
20 was approximately 1.07. With the conventional fuel, the
local power peaking occurred in the outer peripheral zone,
and its factor is approximately 1.13. Consequently, in
the case of the conventional fuel, the maximum thermal
flux occurred in the outer peripheral zone during the
25 initial stage of burn-up and its value was approximately
109 W/cm₂. On the other hand, in the case of the
embodiment of the present invention shown in Fig. 3,
the maximum thermal flux occurred in the outer peripheral

1 zone during the initial stage of burn-up, and, despite
the fact that small-diameter fuel rods were employed in
that zone, the value of the maximum thermal flux was
approximately 109 W/cm^2 , which is identical with that of
5 the conventional fuel. In addition, in the case of the
conventional fuel, the maximum linear heat rating
occurred in the outer peripheral zone and was approximately
490 W/cm, whereas, in the case of the embodiment shown
in Fig. 3, the maximum linear heat rating occurred in
10 the central zone and was about 460 W/cm, representing a
reduction of about 6%.

Referring now to Fig. 5, description will be
made of an application of the present invention to a
light water reactor.

15 Fig. 5 is a cross-sectional view of a fuel
assembly in which the present invention is applied to a
boiling light water reactor. The fuel assembly shown in
this drawing employs 36 small-diameter fuel rods 1 in
the outer peripheral zone, 36 large-diameter fuel rods
20 2 in the central and intermediate zones, and three fuel
rods 5 disposed adjacent to a control rod and having the
smallest diameter. Each of the small-diameter fuel rods
1 has an outer diameter of about 10 mm, and fuel pellets
having a diameter of about 8.1 mm are loaded in them.
25 Reference numeral 14 denotes a cross-shaped control rod.
Each of the large-diameter fuel rods 2 has an outer
diameter of about 13.2 mm, and fuel pellets having a
diameter of about 11.3 mm are loaded in them. Each of

1 the three fuel rods having the smallest diameter has an
outer diameter of about 9 mm, and fuel pellets having a
diameter of about 7.4 mm are loaded in them. Although,
in Fig. 5, fuel rods of three types of outer diameter
5 are used, it is possible to increase or decrease the
number of types of the outer diameter depending on the
rate of variations in the thermal neutron flux density
and the need for equalizing the output distribution.
Furthermore, it is also possible to make a part of the
10 fuel rod a water rod as in the case of fuel for a
conventional boiling water reactor.

A comparison between the fuel assembly shown
in Fig. 5 and the conventional fuel for a boiling light
water reactor is shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6

| Item | Fuel | | Fig. 5 (Embodiment of the invention applied to BWR) | Conventional fuel for BWR |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | | | | |
| Dia of fuel rod (mm) | | adjacent to control rod | approx. 9 mm (3 pcs.) | approx. 12.5 mm |
| | | outer peripheral zone | approx. 10 mm (33 pcs.) | |
| | | central and intermediate zones | approx. 13.2 mm (36 pcs.) | |
| Weight of fuel per assembly (kg) | | | approx. 200 kg | approx. 200 kg |
| Weight of fissile material per assembly ^{235}U (kg) | | | approx. 4.8 kg | approx. 4.8 kg |
| Weight percent of ^{235}U (wt%) | | | 2.7 wt% (identical) | 2.7 wt% (average) |
| No. of types of enrichment of ^{235}U | | | 1 | 4 |
| Burn-up degree (MWd/t) | | | 32000 MWd/t | 29500 MWd/t |

1 As shown in Table 6, in the case of the fuel
in the embodiment shown in Fig. 5, although the weight
of fuel and the weight of uranium 235 are identical as
those of the fuel for a conventional boiling light water
5 reactor, the burn-up degree became about 32,000 MWd/t
in contrast to about 29,500 MWd for the conventional fuel.
Thus, it can be seen that the burn-up degree can be
improved by 2,500 MWd/t (i.e., 10%).

 Although only one type of uranium enrichment
10 factor was adopted in the embodiment shown in Fig. 5,
it is also possible to change the enrichment factor in
the radial or axial direction of the fuel assembly so
as to effect a further equalization of the output
distribution.

15 Referring now to Fig. 6, description will be
made of an application of the present invention to a
pressurized light water reactor.

 Fig. 6 is a cross-sectional view of a fuel
assembly in which the present invention is applied to a
20 pressurized light water reactor. The fuel shown in Fig.
6 is pressurized water-type fuel employing 17 by 17 rows
of fuel rods, in which small-diameter fuel rods 1 are
employed for 66 fuel rods in the outer peripheral zone
and 100 fuel rods adjacent to control rods 7, while large-
25 diameter fuel rods 2 are employed for the remaining 98
fuel rods. In addition, this fuel assembly has 25 control
rod guide pipes 6. The control rod guide pipes 6 are
adapted such that the control rods 7 are capable being

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1 driven therein. Each of the small-diameter fuel rods
2 has an outer diameter of about 9.4 mm, and fuel pellets
having a diameter of about 8.0 mm are loaded therein.
Each of the large-diameter fuel rods 2 has an outer
5 diameter of about 10.6 mm, and fuel pellets having a
diameter of about 9.3 mm are loaded therein.

According to the embodiment shown in Fig. 6,
it becomes possible to equalize the distribution of the
local output inside the fuel assembly, and is also
10 possible to reduce the maximum linear heat rating. In
addition, since the diameter of the fuel rods adjacent
to the control rods is made small, the linear heat
rating in their surroundings declines, and it becomes
possible to improve the soundness of fuel with respect
15 to the driving of control rods during operation.

The advantages of the present invention will
be described below by taking a pressure tube type reactor
as an illustration.

Fig. 7 is a cross-sectional view taken along
20 the axis of a pressure tube 10 in the calandria tube 11
of a pressure tube type reactor. To facilitate comparison,
an array of conventional fuel rods 2 having the same
diameter is shown in the upper portion of the drawing,
while an array of fuel rods 1, 2 of the present invention
25 is shown in the lower portion thereof. In the central
portion of the drawing, the distribution of neutron flux
density in the case where the array of the conventional
fuel is used is shown by a dotted line B, while the

1 distribution of neutron flux density in the case where
the array of the fuel of the present invention is used
is shown by a solid line A.

As can be appreciated from comparison between
5 the solid line A and the dotted line B in Fig. 7, as for
the fuel assembly arranged according to the present
invention, the decline of the thermal neutron flux density
thereof takes place gradually from the outer peripheral
zone to the central zone. In addition, there is no need
10 for the enrichment factor of fuel rods to be decreased
in the outer peripheral zone having a high neutral flux
density. Namely, it becomes possible to dispose a
greater volume of fissile material in the zone having a
high neutron flux density, thereby allowing the burn-up
15 degree of the fuel assembly to be improved without
increasing the local power output.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. A fuel assembly for a nuclear reactor, adapted to be loaded in a reactor core and having a longitudinal axis with an outer peripheral zone surrounding said longitudinal axis and a central zone surrounded by said outer peripheral zone, said fuel assembly comprising a plurality of fuel rods extending along said longitudinal axis each of which has a predetermined fuel volume, said plurality of fuel rods including fuel rods that are arrayed in said outer peripheral zone of said fuel assembly and fuel rods that are arrayed in said central zone, wherein the fuel volume of each of said fuel rods disposed in said outer peripheral zone is smaller than that of each of said fuel rods disposed in said central zone.

2. A fuel assembly for a nuclear reactor, adapted to be loaded in a reactor core and having a longitudinal axis with an outer peripheral zone surrounding said longitudinal axis and a central zone surrounded by said outer peripheral zone, said fuel assembly comprising a plurality of fuel rods extending along said longitudinal axis each of which has a predetermined diameter, said plurality of fuel rods including fuel rods that are arrayed in said outer peripheral zone of said fuel assembly and fuel rods that are arrayed in said central zone, wherein the diameter of each of said fuel rods disposed in said outer peripheral zone is smaller than that of each of said fuel rods disposed in said central

zone.

3. A fuel assembly for a nuclear reactor according to claim 2, wherein said fuel assembly has a plurality of central support rods disposed in said central zone.

4. A fuel assembly for a nuclear reactor according to claim 2, wherein said fuel assembly for a reactor has a hollow cylinder with a diameter larger than that of said fuel rods disposed in said central zone as well as a port serving as an entrance and exit for a coolant at the upper and lower portions of said cylinder.

5. A fuel assembly for a boiling water reactor, adapted to be loaded in the core of said reactor, said fuel assembly being divided into a plurality of groups surrounding one cross-shaped control rod and having a longitudinal axis with an outer peripheral zone surrounding said longitudinal axis and a central zone surrounded by said outer peripheral zone, said fuel assembly comprising a plurality of fuel rods extending along said longitudinal axis each of which has a predetermined diameter, said plurality of fuel rods including fuel rods that are arrayed in said outer peripheral zone of said fuel assembly and fuel rods that are arrayed in said central zone, wherein the diameter of each of said fuel rods disposed in said outer peripheral zone is smaller than that of each of said fuel rods disposed in said central zone, and the diameter of each of said fuel rods among those disposed in said outer peripheral zone which is disposed adjacent to said control rod is smaller than

that of fuel rods that are disposed in the other portion of said outer peripheral zone.

6. A fuel assembly for a pressurized water reactor, adapted to be loaded in the core of said reactor, said fuel assembly incorporating therein a plurality of control rod guide pipes each accommodating a control rod, said fuel assembly having a longitudinal axis along which said control rod guide pipes are disposed and an outer peripheral zone surrounding said longitudinal axis, said fuel assembly comprising a plurality of fuel rods extending along said longitudinal axis, said plurality of fuel rods including at least two types of fuel rods, comprising at least a set of fuel rods having a large diameter and another set of fuel rods having a small diameter, wherein said small-diameter fuel rods are arrayed in said outer peripheral zone of said fuel assembly and in the vicinity of a position adjacent to said control guide pipes.

FIG. 1

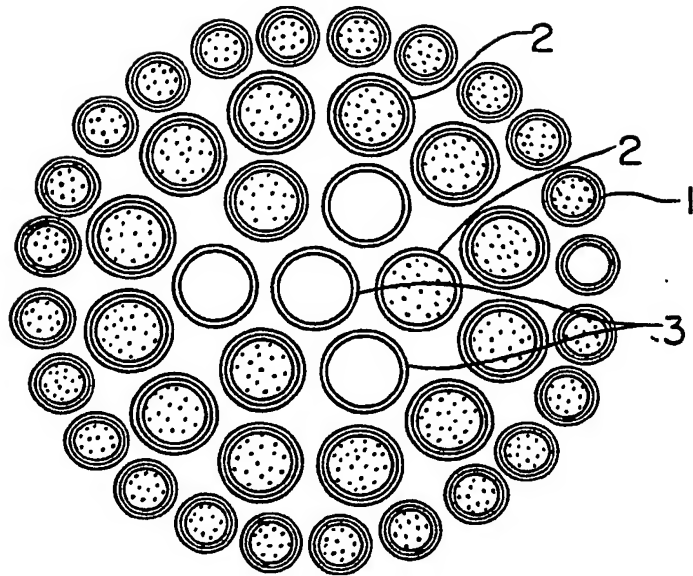


FIG. 2

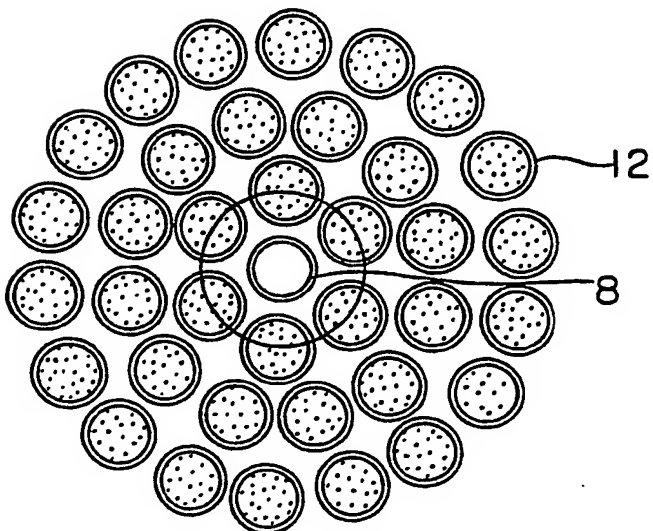


FIG. 3

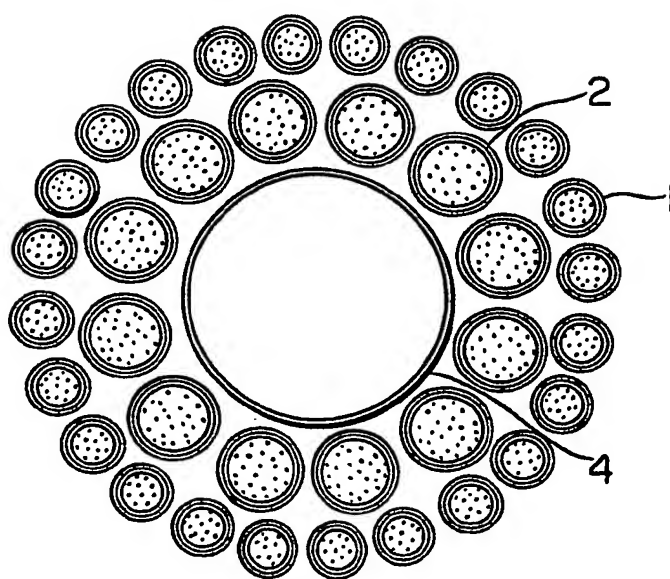


FIG. 4

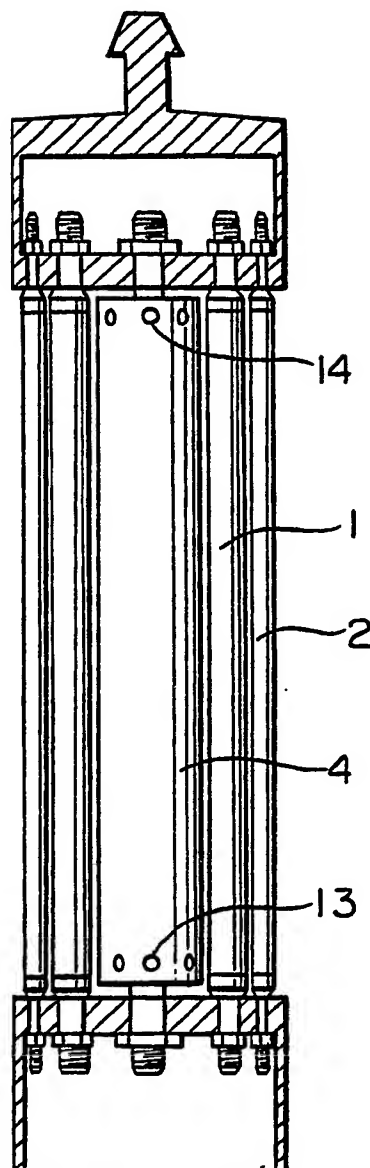


FIG. 5

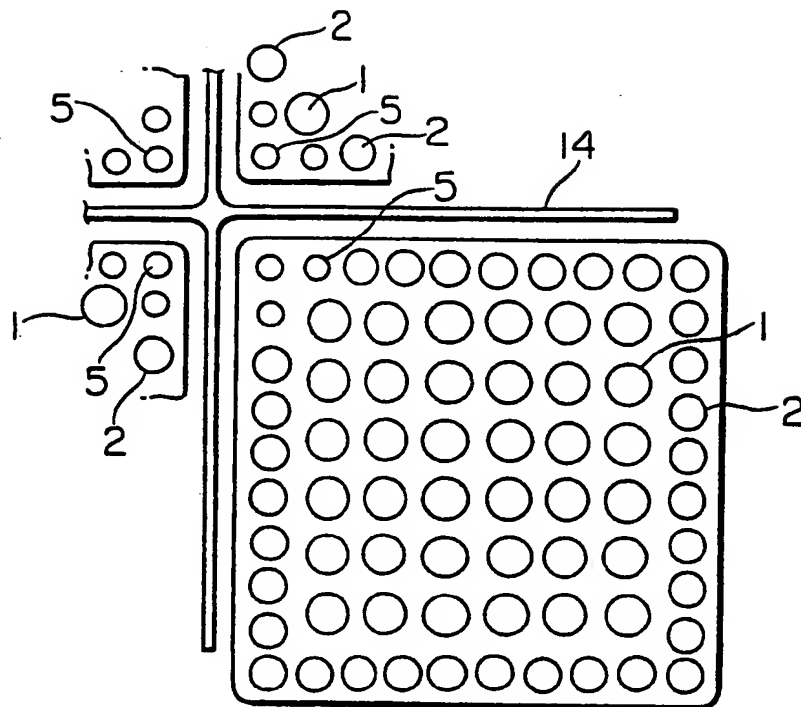


FIG. 6

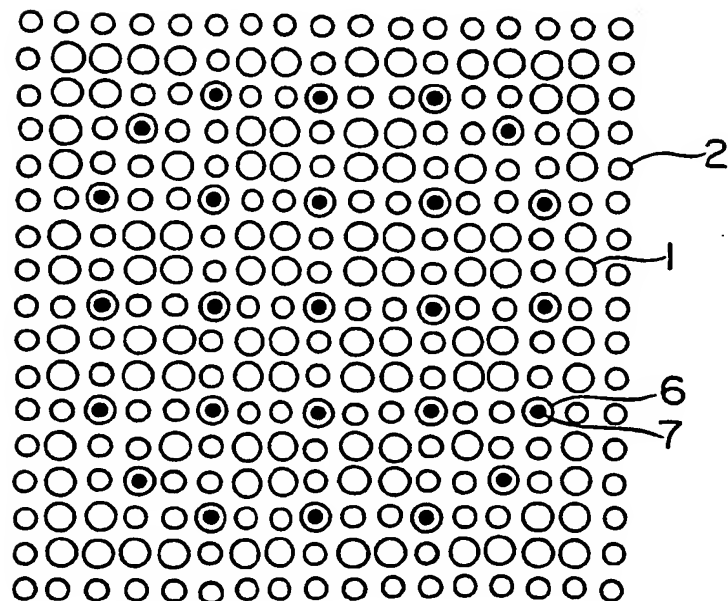
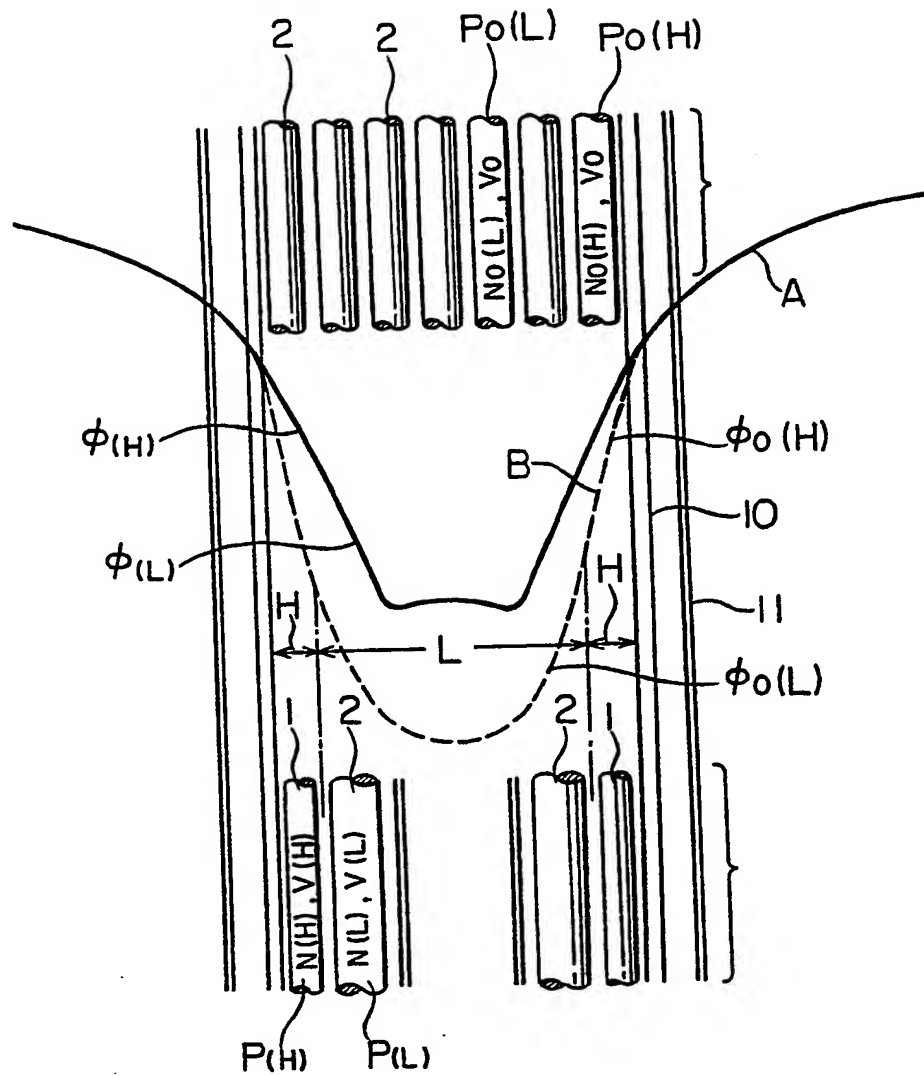


FIG. 7





European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

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EP 86 10 4450

| DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Category | Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages | Relevant to claim | CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl. 4) |
| X | FR-A-1 252 674 (SOCIETE NAT.D'ETUDE ET CONSTRUCTION DE MOTEURS D'AVIATION) * Page 2, right-hand column, lines 3-17; figures 5,6 * | 1,2 | G 21 C 7/00 G 21 C 3/32 |
| D,A | US-A-3 132 076 (J.M. WEST et al.) * Column 3, line 71 - column 4, line 9; figure 5 * | 1-3 | |
| A | US-A-3 344 036 (R.J. HASLAM et al.) * Column 3, lines 3-12; figures 2,6 * | 1-4 | |
| A | EP-A-O 094 255 (WESTINGHOUSE) * Claim 1; figures 5,6 * | 5,6 | TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl. 4) G 21 C 7/00 G 21 C 3/00 G 21 C 1/00 |
| The present search report has been drawn up for all claims | | | |
| Place of search THE HAGUE | | Date of completion of the search 19-06-1986 | Examiner ERRANI C. |
| CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document | | | |

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